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LOCATING SOVEREIGNTY IN THE AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHIC-POLITICAL POETICS OF DAILY EXISTENCE IN TWO AMAZONIAN FILMS

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ABSTRACT The theme of daily life is a common one in the Brazilian *Video in the Villages* (Vídeo nas aldeias) filmic archive. I analyze the diversity of cinematic treatments of and approaches to the theme of daily life in an Indigenous village by comparing, contrasting, and examining how two films construct, embody, and experience communal life through culturally specific methods of inquiry. In particular, I explore concepts of time, the senses, creativity, and the relations between the individual and the collectivity as all of the above are cinematically rendered in the intimacy, the performance, and the ritual of daily life. Specifically, I look at how these two VNA productions, *Shomõtsi* (2001) and *Kiarãsã Tõ Sâty, The Agouti's Peanut* (2005), re-politicize the everyday through sovereign practices. I discuss these cinematic works as they relate to imperfect media (Salazar & Cordova, 2008), decolonial pedagogies, and the "cosmological embeddedness of the everyday" (Overing & Passes, 2000, p. 298).

SUMÀRIO O tema da vida cotidiana é comum no arquivo cinematográfico da organização de Vídeo nas Aldeias. Analiso a diversidade de tratamentos cinematográficos e abordagens sobre o tema da vida cotidiana em uma aldeia indígena, comparando, contrastando e examinando como dois filmes elaboram, incorporam e vivem a vida comunitária através de métodos de investigação culturalmente específicos. Em particular, exploro conceitos de tempo, sentidos, criatividade e as relações entre o indivíduo e a coletividade, uma vez que todos os itens acima são apresentados cinematicamente na intimidade, no desempenho e no ritual da vida cotidiana. Especificamente, eu investigo como essas duas produções da VNA, *Shomõtsi* (2001) e *Kiarãsã Tõ Sâty, O amendoim da cutia* (2005), re-politizam o cotidiano por meio de práticas soberanas. Discuto esses trabalhos cinematográficos relacionados à mídia imperfeita (Salazar e Cordova 2008), às

pedagogias descoloniais e à "inserção cosmológica do cotidiano" (Overing 298).

Keywords Video in the Villages, Brazil, Indigenous, Sovereignty, Decolonial, Film

Introduction

"Cinema here is a shared experience of affirmation of language, rituals, food – in other words, a celebration of the everyday life of each village"[1].

The theme of daily life in the village is a common one in the Brazilian *Video in the Villages* (*Vídeo nas aldeias* or VNA henceforth) filmic archive. VNA is a non-governmental organization that has operated over the last three decades. Founded by Vincent Carelli in 1986, it then became a film school for Indigenous filmmakers through workshops carried out in Indigenous villages. Today, VNA houses one of Latin America's most critical archives of approximately one hundred films on and by over forty Indigenous nations across Brazil. Mari Corrêa, who joined VNA's team in 1998 and who co-directed VNA with Vincent Carelli until 2009, articulates the idea of "filming nothing" (2004) as part of a cinematic approach in the video workshops. In this paper, I analyze the diversity of cinematic treatments of and approaches to the theme of daily life in an Indigenous village by comparing, contrasting, and examining how two VNA produced films construct, embody, and experience everyday communal life through culturally specific methods of inquiry. In particular, I explore concepts of time, the senses, creativity, and the relations between the individual and the collectivity as all of the above are cinematically rendered in the intimacy and the ritual of daily life. I argue that cinema, as an interdisciplinary form and subject of study, can re-imagine life projects by re-politicizing daily life as an anti-colonial practice.

Specifically, I look at two Amazonian films: *Shomõtsi* (2001) and *Kiarãsã Tõ Sâty, The Agouti's Peanut* (2005) as they relate to social philosophies of "living well" (*sumac kawsay*[2] or *buen*

1 Andréa França cited in Corrêa et al. p. 30

2 This Aymara term has been discussed as a decolonial paradigm that implies culturally specific ways of living in community and in harmony with humans and nature.

vivir). Further, I explore how the auto-ethnographic as a method of inquiry in the Asháninka film *Shomõtsi* is experienced as a transformative process with fertile decolonial potential for both filmmaker and audience alike. In the Panará film, *Kiarãsã Tõ Sâty, The Agouti's Peanut*, I apply a multi-sensory approach to a reading of the film as a means to deconstruct colonial hierarchies of knowledge while engaging Panará specific cosmologies. Having chosen these cinematic works for their meditation on daily life, their geographical location within the Amazon, and their production period between 2001-2005, I also discuss them as they relate to imperfect media (Salazar & Cordova, 2008), and the "cosmological embeddedness of the everyday" (Overing, 2000, p. 298). In this way, these works articulate a micropolitics that repoliticizes daily life from an Indigenous centric position. One of the aims of this paper is to examine cinema's pedagogical potential through a cinematic lens that engages an anticolonial framework from a global south location.

As a feminist, mixed-race person, with Middle Eastern ancestry as well with family in and cultural affinities with Brazil, I have a stake in advocating for the recognition of a plurivocal cinematic voice within the academy, one that includes a critical Indigenous presence as part of dismantling intersectional oppressions. I came to my investigation on Brazilian Indigenous cinema through my interest in and past research on Third cinema in Latin America and its legacy as a decolonial project. As a film studies scholar, instructor, film programmer, and as a practicing media artist and filmmaker, I apply experiential and practical knowledge across these intellectual and educational spheres in order to create space for intercultural discussion and exchange. In line with Karen L. Potts and Leslie Brown's discussion (2015), I apply anti-oppressive research methods, where instead of trying to prove a singular truth, "we [I] look for meaning, for understanding, for insights that can enable resistance and change" (p. 20). My intention is thus to dialogue with the cinematic texts herein, to reflect on the different ways of knowing, of being in, and of seeing the world from a decolonial framework.

***Shomõtsi* (2001)**

Shomõtsi starts with an establishing wide shot of an Asháninka village at dawn. We hear the sounds of life in an Amazonian Indigenous village awakening: birds chirping, roosters crowing,

and dogs barking. An edited montage shows us medium wide shots and close-ups of animals; then, we cut to a long shot of our protagonist, an older man in his late 50s or 60s, as he walks, the hand-held camera following him. He collects chopped wood to make a fire. A voice-over tells us: "Shomõtsi is the name of a hummingbird which is small and red and lives in our forest. Shomõtsi is also a name of a character who you will meet in this movie." We follow Shomõtsi in his morning perambulations. The narrator and filmmaker, Wewito Piãko, explains to the viewer in the voice-over that he chose Shomõtsi because he lives near his house in the Asháninka village called Apiwtxa. Wewito goes on to say[3], "I'm going to show you how he lives day by day in this film." Wewito's voice-over in *Shomõtsi* doesn't mark him as an outsider or as a purportedly objective, all-knowing narrator.

Although Wewito is looking at his world, even objectifying it from the standpoint of a filmmaker, the material effect of his voice combined with the intimacy of his camera's gaze, brings him into Shomõtsi's social sphere and positions Wewito as another character in the film. In this context, Wewito explains his privileged relationship with Shomõtsi as a neighbor in his village and as a teacher about "our culture" (quoted in Carelli et al, 2011, p. 208). We never actually see Wewito; yet our entire cinematic experience is shaped by his distinctive point of view and embodied through his camera movements. In short, we go where he chooses for us to go; we see what he chooses for us to see, and we hear his voice telling us what he wants us to know about Shomõtsi and his world. As a result of this subjective camera, questions often arise and are left unanswered or open ended in a more self-reflexive and distinctively authorial tone. These choices of what to exclude from a general public's eyes are hinted at further on in the film, a point which I will return to later. Arguably, his audience is largely non-Asháninka and non-Indigenous; we are aware of his subjectivity both individually and collectively within his community and what he is choosing to show and tell us about Shomõtsi, himself, and his community. This more individualized point of view shapes *Shomõtsi* as a film in a way that is distinct from the collective nature of many of the co-authored films in VNA's filmography.

3 I often use first names to designate some of the Indigenous filmmakers at VNA to avoid confusion as some use their tribe's name as a last name or share a last name with other community members and filmmakers also quoted in the text.

The process of filming *Shomõtsi,* of observing and discovering everyday life as extraordinary, becomes a critical space for Wewito to reflect on his position within his culture and community, while deciding what to convey through film and video to an outside public. In one of the film's early scenes, we see Shomõtsi in his house, a separate unit isolated from any other visible dwellings. Like many Asháninka communities, people are often grouped in isolated households in nuclear family units with varying degrees of distance from other community members (Killick, 2009, p. 703). We see Shomõtsi paint his face with a red paste. Rather than any ethnographic or anthropological explanation, we are immersed in this world through the camera of a fellow Asháninka neighbour and friend. The sound is all diegetic; we hear the rich, textured universe of the Amazon - sounds of the river, birds, bugs and animals, in stereo depth and detail. It's important to note that Apiwtxa, as an Asháninka village and as a site, has come to represent Asháninka sovereignty through "resistance" and "sustainability" (Isaac quoted in Carelli et al, 2011, p. 80)[4]. Thus, the presence and dominance of the soundscape become a sonic signpost situating us in a physical landscape, sonically highlighting the importance of place as part of the filmmaker's subjective and collective positionality.

It's not until the next day, when we see a close-up of Shomõtsi painting his face again with even more precision than the first day, that Wewito's voice over explains to his non-Asháninka audience, "We paint ourselves with annatto dye every morning, so we can go to work or to a celebration." Through Wewito's self-reflexive camera, we observe, as he does, the beautifying of the everyday through this ritual gesture of face painting. In many VNA films, we witness how the autoethnographic becomes a method of inquiry as well as a means to activate and perform sovereign, spiritual, cultural, and political positions through film. Although *Shomõtsi* follows another character in Apiwtxa, autoethnographic performance is relevant to the cinematic space that Wewito embodies through camera movement and

4 José Pimenta's article in *Revista de Antropologia*, "Indigenismo e ambientalismo na Amazônia occidental: a propósito dos Asháninka do rio Amônia" provides more in depth discussion about the context and history of extractive industries (logging in particular) in the region of the river Amônia and the Asháninka's politics of resistance and sustainability.

voice-over narration. There is often little explanation of what is being filmed; the fourth wall of the observational camera is often broken when, for example, Shomõtsi directly addresses Wewito and asks, "Aren't you going to use your machete?" We hear the filmmaker answer "no." "Let me borrow it," answers Shomõtsi. Our awareness of the corporeal relationship of camera to filmed subject is ever present in this film; this type of interaction between camera person and filmed subject emphasizes the physical, complicit, and kindred intimacy, as opposed to separation, of filmmaker and filmed subject. Wewito's reflections are apt here: "Filming, following a particular person or a family, is just like doing research. You become closer to the person, learning more and more about his or her life, discovering stories you had never known before" (quotedin Carelli et al, 2011, p. 208). This testimony demonstrates the transformative process of documentary filmmaking; moreover, it also articulates the responsibility and ownership of self-representation through anti-oppressive research methods.

Significantly, as the Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains, when an Indigenous person becomes the researcher and not merely the researched, "the activity of research is transformed" (1999, p. 93). In this sense, Wewito's research engagement is a way of framing individual self and collective identity; thus, his method of inquiry is autoethnographic. Autoethnographies have been defined as "self-narrative[s] that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts" (Spry, 2001, p.710). In the context of *Shomõtsi* and of much of VNA's archive, the autoethnographic goes beyond the social and becomes a way of reclaiming contested geo-political-historical-cultural narratives while performing evolving Indigenous identities. *Shomõtsi* as one component of VNA's archive, is part of a larger shared process of constructing culturally and politically distinct methods of inquiry (Whitinui, 2014)[5] within the cinematic space, often blurring lines between documentary, fiction, political film, essay film, ethnography, and autoethnography.

5 Paul Whitinui's article, "Indigenous Autoethnography: Exploring, Engaging, and Experiencing 'Self as a Native Method of Inquiry" (2014) was particularly useful in framing VNA's work as a distinctly "Native Method of Inquiry" as defined by Whitinui.

Through Wewito's camera eye, we witness the specificity of Asháninka cultural emphasis on self-reliance and voluntary relations based on amity and friendship, rather than on kinship. Contrary to much of the literature on Amazonian sociality and conviviality (see Overing & Passes, 2000). Killick (2009) argues that Asháninka cultural values place emphasis on formalized personal friendships in everyday life. The filmmaking process in *Shomõtsi* thus becomes a testament to an evolving friendship between filmmaker and filmed subject, while consciously or unconsciously revealing distinct Asháninka cultural and social formations as well as Wewito's personal/political subjectivity.

As Cordóva and Salazar (2008) contend, "at the center of a poetics of Indigenous media, we locate socially embedded self-representation, or the active process of making culture visible" (p. 40). An example of "making culture visible" is when Shomõtsi paints his face for the second time and is preparing for the weekend festivity. We see him adorn himself with a traditional, feather-laden woven hat, and with beaded necklaces. Wewito explains how, in a not so distant past, the beads were only used for personal use in celebrations and in the beautifying of daily life; in contrast, now they are also sold to make money to "buy the things they need." Notably, Shomõtsi's digital watch stands out in contrast to the rest of his traditional outfit as a reminder of the current times Wewito and Shomõtsi inhabit – one where beadwork is no longer exclusively made for personal and ceremonial use.

While most members are dressed in traditional garb consisting of long and loose fitting dark brown or cream and brown striped patterned robes with V-neck holes for the neck and longer sleeves for the arms, we see one of Shomõtsi's fellow flute players with a blue baseball cap that reads "Jesus" in large letters. Through Wewito's camera, the "Jesus" cap stands out as a contemporary reminder of Brazil's growing Evangelism; in addition, it further evokes the Asháninka's long and difficult history with missionaries, dating back to Franciscan missions in eighteenth century colonial Peru[6]. The festivities continue until the beer is gone, and the participants are more inebriated

6 Hanne Veber's discussion of "Asháninka Messianism" (2003) provides a historical perspective on Franciscan missions, rebellions and Asháninka cosmology.

than sober. In this informal and often drunken fraternizing, Shomõtsi asks his brother-in-law about going to the city.

At the end of the day of weekend festivities and socializing, the camera fades out; next a fade in to the dawn of a new day brings a new direction to the film. In terms of structure, roughly the first half of the film takes place in the village; the second half of the film not only represents a change of location and setting from Apiwtxa to the nearest town, but the entire tone and narrative of the film shift drastically. Wewito's voice-over explains that Shomõtsi is going to the city to get his monthly pension. Besides the voice-over narration, the canoe ride down the river on route to the city is the first time we hear non-diegetic sound. Traditional Asháninka music, marked by flutes and a percussive rhythm over the image of a young Asháninka boy at the helm of the canoe, marks the transition from village to town. In an interview, Wewito discusses his response to this unexpected turn of events, "It's one thing to film in the village, another entirely to film in the town where the tensions are high because of our history…" (quoted in Carelli et al, 2011, p. 208). Looking at the film's overall arc, Wewito's positionality behind the lens is fluid and dynamic as he responds to his character's actions and movements through time and space; his camera's eye is always ranging between his subjectivity as a fellow Asháninka, his responsibility in representing his community, the exploratory and self-reflexive lens of auto-ethnography, and the objectifying of a filmic subject as worthy of research and observation.

Once their boat lands on the banks of the closest town, Shomõtsi changes out of his traditional clothes into a T shirt and pants. Wewito's voice-over tells us that the airplane which brings in the money has not yet arrived. We cut to Shomõtsi who explains that all there is left to do is to wait even though he and his Asháninka companions are stranded without any money to buy food. We see Shomõtsi and others from the village go the beach to set up camp while they wait. Wewito's ease of filming in the village has altered through this spatial displacement: his positionality as Asháninka is reinforced and defended through a voice-over that says, "We, the Ashéninka people are used to sleeping on the river bank, it is part of our customs. We make a hut and camp out, just like they are doing here." The implication seems to be that Wewito is perhaps countering a negative view

of Asháninka that some in the town may have. Isaac, Wewito's brother, elaborates how, "when we're in the town, they look down on us: 'Ah, this Asháninka stinks, these old clothes'" (quoted in Carelli et al, 2011, p. 209). The ensuing scenes of the encampment on the riverbank make visible a complex clash of values and ideas between Indigenous (Asháninka) / and non-Indigenous (Brazilians). Some dependency on government money is part of the equation, as that is the reason Shomõtsi and his companions are there, waiting, just as we are (as viewers), to see if his pension will arrive.

After three days of waiting Shomõtsi finally receives his pension of three hundred and two reais. He then goes to some of the local shops to buy cloth; what we don't see is him spending his money on alcohol. Yet, we do see him drunk with his bag of cloth and a depleted wallet. Wewito explains how this moment in the film was particularly difficult and that he thought about giving up (quoted in Carelli et al, 2011, p. 208). We feel the tension of Wewito's struggles with the ethics of representation and the community he is responsible to and engaged with. Certainly, VNA's filmography as a whole develops a filmic language of affirmation, experimentation, and research through a diversity of narrative and filmic approaches which reflect the nuanced to distinct cosmologies, aesthetics, and practices of each group, community, and individual filmmakers. The Asháninka's idea of living well is distinct from the Panará people's idea of living well; the latter emphasize reciprocity, kinship, and physically closer communal social organization within their villages. In contrast, for the Asháninka, living peacefully and well "one must not live with others" (Killick, 2009, p. 706). And, indeed, this physical separation in village organization and spatialization, as well as the tendency for Asháninka's human relationships to be based on affinity rather than on kinship, informs Wewito's cinematic dynamic and approach in a distinct way from his Amazonian neighbours'.

Although Wewito demonstrates a unique cinematic voice in VNA's filmography, the film's dialogic tone can be understood as being in conversation with several implied audiences - his Asháninka community, a larger local and global Indigenous community, a local and global non-Indigenous community, not to mention VNA's workshop coordinators (Mari and Vincent) and editor (Mari). Notably, the film generated community

discussions on issues of ageing and pensions, as well as on the community's relations with the municipality (Marechal Thaumaturgo), and on questions of trade and money (Isaac Piãko quoted in Carelli et al, 2011, 209). This extension of the film's screen politics into actualizing better relationships of respect and reciprocity between the Asháninka and their non-Indigenous neighbours is a prime example of how VNA's work has significant repercussions on and off screen[7]. Importantly, the distribution of Indigenous films within Indigenous communities has also promoted solidarity and deeper cultural understanding between Brazilian Indigenous groups.

The film ends with shots of Shomõtsi and his companions returning on the motorized canoe back to Apiwtxa. We hear Wewito's voice-over, "our film comes to an end here, but life goes on. We are happy to get out of the city and go back to the village." For the second time, we hear non-diegetic sound of an Asháninka song (titled *Nowashiritani* translated to "My Memories" in English), recorded in the Apiwtxa community in 2000.

***Kiarãsã Tõ Sâty, The Agouti's Peanut* (2005)**

The theme of daily life in the Panará village of Nasepotiti is concurrent with *Shomõtsi*, yet *Kiarãsã Tõ Sâty, The Agouti's Peanut's* opening and closing are bookended by the arrival and departure of a single engine airplane, first bringing the Panará teacher, one of the film's protagonists, to his village, and then taking him back to Brasilia. We do see the break of dawn and the darkening of day to mark the passage of time in the village; nevertheless, the image of the plane imposes another construct of time, space, and technology within this Panará village. The airplane can be seen as the time, space, and technology of the

7 As a result of community discussions generated from the film, Isaac Piãko explains how he brought the Asháninka films to the "Marechal Thaumaturgo Education Secretary" (209). Copies of the films were then distributed to local schools within the district. Piãko relates how this process of making films and using them in educational contexts has resulted in positive change in the local non-Indigenous community in terms of achieving better understanding and gaining more respect.

Hipe or white world[8]; the image of the plane arriving and departing harks back to the Panará's first contact with Brazilian society. Thus, the image of the plane suggests the encroachment of the white world; it evinces the Panará teachers, and the Panará people's relation with and identity within his/their territory and a larger nation state. The plane becomes a metonym for a here and there, an us and other, a center and periphery; or as the Asháninka filmmaker, Isaac Piãko puts it, "us here and you there" (2006, p.17). The first time the Panará saw an airplane fly over their village was in 1967; they called the plane *pakyã'akriti* or "phony shooting star" ("Panará: History of Contact", 2004, para. 1). Inside the plane was one of the infamous Villas Bôas brothers[9], Cláudio, who was on mission to locate and pacify the Panará "before contact was made with the whites in the Peixoto de Azevedo River area" ("Panará: History of Contact" 2004, para. 1). This "phony shooting star," entered the Panará universe in 1967 and changed the course of their lives forever. The opening image of the plane arriving in Nasepotiti in 2005, which alludes to first contact, can be seen as a self-reflexive and often subtle meditation on the violent history of contact with the white world and the present-day integration of non-Indigenous elements (including the use of video technology) into Panará society.

The camera follows the Panará teacher as he exits the plane in his city clothes and explains that he was in Brasilia "studying our language and Portuguese" and "translating the healthcare pamphlet." We see him walk to a house and lie in a hammock. The audio upon his entrance to the house shifts: we hear traditional singing voices, the rhythmic sound of feet

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8 Elizabeth Ewart discusses the meaning of the word *Hipe* in the Panará language in her article, "Images of Time in Panará Village." The word has shifted over the course of history and contact with non-Indigenous people. Ewart claims, "This category of *hipe* has now come to signify white or non-Indigenous people" (2008, 262).

9 The Villas Bôas brothers, Orlando, Claudio, and Leonardo, are known for their 25 years of work for the Indigenous cause in Brazil; they believed that Brazil's Indigenous people should not be acculturated nor civilized and isolated from the western world which culminated in the Xingu National Park. The legal protection of the Xingu National Park is the first protected Indigenous area in all South America and became a prototype for other reserves all over the continent (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Villas-B%C3%B4as_brothers).

pattering on the earth. In this transition from the plane, to the village, to his house, we enter another time signaled through the sense of sound. We enter the time of the village, the time of dancing bodies, the time of ritual through the sound of music and dancing feet on the earth. The music fades into a background sound; we hear the Panará teacher discuss some of the differences in the city where money is needed for everything as opposed to the village where "we eat with friends, we don't have to pay for anything." A cut to a wide, low-angle shot in the village's central plaza connects us to the film's location as we see the red earth; we see the Panará community, with traditional body paint, and adornments, and few to no clothes (as is their custom), dancing and singing in row formation.

As the film unfolds, so too do the spatial, social, corporeal, spiritual, and practical relations of daily village life in Nasepotiti. The above are explored and expanded upon through the camera's relationship to its filmed subjects, namely the film's focus on three main characters who are never actually named: a village teacher, a village shaman, and a village chief. The village has multiple functions in the film; it is the film's setting but, it is also a subject and character worthy of cinematic study as it expresses the interdependent and interrelated relationship between filmmakers and land, and between the film's characters and their environment. The village is a universe explored both literally and virtually in this film and as throughline in VNA's filmography.

One of the ways the film articulates the Panará's relationship to land is through the tale of how the agouti gave the peanut to the Panará, giving the film its title. In my analysis, I discuss the importance of senses, visible and invisible, heard and not heard, as expressed in this Panará film and as an approach to understanding VNA's archive as reflective of cosmologies that are multi-sensory and embedded in cinematic language. The self-reflexive nature of many VNA films, coupled with a multi-sensory engagement with Indigenous cosmologies, calls into question the constructed relationships and power dynamics of who is looking and who is being looked at, who is speaking and who is being spoken to, who is listening and who is being heard, who is filming and who is being filmed. I also explore how the senses are engaged through powerful relationships to land and I further examine how daily life is repoliticized in this

autonomous non-market economy that practices a sustainable model for the Liberation of Mother Earth.[10] Echoed in many corners of the planet and articulated by the Brazilian Indigenous leader, Casé Angatu Xukuru Tupinambá in an interview when asked about the importance of land and territory he says,

> …territory is sacred. We are not owners of the land, we are the land… Because we are the land, we have a right to be on earth and the right to protect what we call sacred, nature, she nourishes us and we nurture her… It is a struggle for a natural right (Casé Angatu Xukuru Tupinambá quoted in Machado, 2019)[11].

In the opening scenes of *Kiarãsã Tõ Sâty, the Agouti's Peanut* (2005), as we are introduced to our three characters, a naked older woman, one of the village shamans, emerges from her bed behind a white sheet at dawn, naked except for the black markings covering her body, visually signifying to a Panará audience something an *Hipe* (uninitiated non-Panará) cannot know through sight. The body markings are in effect a form of dress and part of a Panará semiotic code, a point I return to later. As the shaman pulls on a dress, she remarks, "I was dreaming that I was stepping on a cobra, stepping and walking on the back of the snake." References to the invisible, the unseen, to the dream world, to the spirit world, to other senses beyond sight are a recurring motif throughout the film.

The history of cinema, dominated by Hollywood, is based on a culture of visuality, of pleasures for the eyes, and as an art of entertainment; in essence, western knowledge and perception privileges sight and seeing as truth. This is also the case of textual knowledge, decipherable through the eyes, which is seen

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10 Since 2014, the communities that make up the Association of Indigenous Councils in the northern Cauca in Colombia have declared themselves in the process of *la liberación de la madre tierra* (liberating Mother Earth), "a ritual act of reclaiming ancestral lands that are being developed" (http://witnessforpeace.org/mother-earths-liberation-the-end-of-the-armed-conflict-and-peace-building/). I use this term here to underline this Indigenous resurgence of land reclamation and territorial rights to land across Abya Yala, as well as a spiritual and eco-justice respect for land as sacred in opposition to an extractive and profit based logic of land ownership.

11 Author's translation from the Portuguese.

as holding more value and weight over oral cultures and ways of knowing which are transmitted through unseen senses such as sound and memory. The film's emphasis on the other senses (dream, sound, spatial order, body paint, etc), becomes a conduit for an unlearning of colonial hierarchies of knowledge and western scientific discourse that privileges vision. *The Agouti's Peanut* continually alludes to other senses and experiences that we cannot necessarily know through sight: the village's daily life offers us a glimpse into this Panará community's spiritual, ceremonial, domestic, and social universe. Ewart (2003) explains that the spatialization of the village, which is revealed to us throughout the course of the film adds another layer of understanding about each character's role within the village sphere. In the film's opening dance sequence, we see that the village is circular, "consisting of thirteen residential houses and a single open sided central house" (Ewart, 2003, p. 263). Panará society is organized into four clans in which descent is passed down in a matrilineal descent system and which are spatialized in the village's architecture according to clan and sun rise and setting points. As such, each clan has a fixed location in the village circle, which is relevant to our understanding of the importance of Panará cosmology and its relationship to space and family within the village.

Following Merleau-Ponty and John Berger, "reciprocal vision implicates a social relationship in the way that uni-directional vision does not" (Ewart, 2008, p. 508). In this way, when viewing VNA's cinematic texts, emphasizing a multi-sensory approach to film analysis is coherent with the significance of the various senses within the societies represented as well as within Indigenous cosmologies. Ewart posits, "I argue that the social significance of the senses is as much bound up with an understanding of sociality — that is, the context within which discourse occurs — as it is bound up with sensory experience itself" (2008, p. 507). One of the ideas explored here is how these cinematic texts allow the discussed Indigenous groups to look back at and talk back to us, as other.

In this sense, VNA's archive, imbued with sovereign corporeal potential, activates a reciprocal way of seeing and being seen, hearing and being heard. Marygold Walsh-Dilley's theorizing of reciprocity in the Andean context is apt in the context of Amazonian societies when she says, "Reciprocity

institutions in rural Andean villages operate with and through a multidimensional set of reasonings, creating a moral–symbolic economy that is reproduced socially through embodied and embedded practices" (2017, p. 517). Reciprocity appears as a leitmotiv throughout VNA's filmography as both an abstract concept and concrete practice: it is pictured through the practice of mediations between humans and other than humans (nature and the spirit world); reciprocity is embedded in filmmaking methods that enact and promote community well-being; it functions as a more nuanced way of experiencing the films. Arguably, the films themselves demand more active viewership rather than mere consumption. Here, the cinematic experience can thus invite a reciprocal exchange of gazes, of sensory, intellectual, and emotional engagement that invite decolonial imaginary shifts in everyday life.

In *The Agouti's Peanut*, the everyday is punctuated with displays of cultural activity (from hunting, fishing, gardening, and weaving, to collecting medicine in the forest, to community efforts of peanut harvest, to children's education) often with a humorous and/or spiritual dimension. These daily activities are not pictured or heard in a stereophonic, nor are they seen in high definition grade but rather are captured through an imperfect, often hand held, experiential camera that is an integral and integrated part of community and environment. Considering access to resources, contexts of production, and tools of representation, the emphasis is not on traditional cinematic texts or high production values; instead, the filmmakers are following a cultural logic and defining the cinematic space as a process for constructing cultural, spiritual, social, and political identity and relationships of reciprocity. The village as a microcosm of interconnected and interdependent systems enacts a dynamically reproduced practice of reciprocal exchange that ultimately strengthens social solidarity, autonomy, and sustainability in a non-market economy.

We move through the daily activities of the three characters, we see the sun setting on a group of young male soccer player, bare chested with their soccer shorts, dancing a traditional dance after the game. We then cut to an elder singing in the black of night, then to low-angle medium wide shots of bodies of traditionally adorned singers and dancers with feathers and beaded finery, annatto dye on their faces, and black body paint

on their bodies. This transition to night signifies the passage of time and the transformation of village space-time. We are brought back to the spatio-temporal reality of ritual as evoked in the film's first dance sequence. The dancing, painted bodies at night in close row formation, tightly pressed together, front to back, with dominant red and black colour palletes, create striking performative images of a collective corporality that is part of a visual language for sensual, spiritual and ancestral identities. We cut to shots of community members painting their bodies, to close-ups of a hand rubbing the annatto red dye on a rock. The chief explains that the use of annatto red dye on the ears is for the agouti who also has red ears; the dancing and singing are for the agouti in preparation for the peanut harvest the following day.

These nocturnal images of the elaborated and artfully painted dancing bodies and decorated skin in black and red dyes and markings can be seen as an elaborate code and expressions of values within Panará society. In this context, according to Turner, the Panará who are the descendants of the Mebêngôkre,

> black is associated with the idea of transformation between society and unsocialised nature. … the term for black applies to a spatial or temporal zone of transition between the social world and the world of natural or infra-social forces that is closed off from society proper and lies beyond its borders (2012, p. 493).

He goes on to say that, "Red, by contrast, is associated with notions of vitality, energy and intensification. It is applied to the peripheral points of the body that come directly into contact with the outside world (the hands and feet, and the face with its sensory organs, "especially the eyes") (p. 493). The dyed red ears in honour of the agouti emphasize the sense of hearing, of remembering, and also of knowing the wisdom of the agouti; as the chief exclaims, "we don't forget what she taught us." Thus, the contrasting black and red body paint becomes an intensification of honoring and accessing the agouti's powers in ancestral and present day Panará mythology while reminding us the importance of being able and open to learn from the sentient world surrounding us. The corporeal canvas of the red

and black colour palette as rendered in a distinctly shamanic cinematic syntax of codified visuality and orality, also speaks to the idiomatic binary of known and unknown, seen and unseen, heard and unheard. The human body becomes a surface for an encoded representational sovereignty of Panará cosmology.

Davi Kopenawa (2013), an Amazonian Yanomami Shaman, eloquently explains:

> A very long time ago, when the forest was still young, our ancestors - who were humans with animal names - metamorphosed into game. … The human agoutis became agoutis. So it is ancestors turned other that we hunt and eat today. On the other hand, the images that we bring down and make dance as *xapiri*[12] are their form of ghosts (p. 61).

Kopenawa and Albert (2013) articulate how the agouti is multiple entities: she is the ancestors who metamorphosed into animals, she is a physical being, an animal which is hunted today, and she is a spirit which lives on forever. For the Panará and throughout the film, the co-existence of material being and immaterial (spiritual) being is part of a cinematic treatment which engages multi-senses and shamanic belief systems. As Ewart observes, "the perceptual senses of hearing and seeing can be understood to be symbolic operators within the Panará lived world" (2008, p. 519). In this way, *The Agouti's Peanut* uses audio-visual technologies to show and tell us a story while simultaneously commenting on the deceptive nature of appearances in a highly transformational world that Amazonian Amerindian people belong to in their everyday lives.

The multi-narratives of this non-fiction film, moving between the three community members, moving between the narrative of the agouti, told through multiple viewpoints, techniques, and generations, serve two primary functions throughout the film. Firstly, we see the daily activities of life in Nasepotiti from multiple viewpoints; secondly, the filmmakers' editing choices between this trifecta of characters is used to reinforce Panará sovereignty in a post-contact world. Each cut

12 Xapiri is the sacred word the Yanomami people of Brazil and Venezuela use for 'spirit.'

builds on the film's overarching themes of Panará cosmology and sovereignty as shown through contemporary daily life. We see villagers return with full baskets of peanuts from their harvest; next, the sky darkens on another day in Nasepotiti, and we cut to the shaman preparing her medicine.

Night again is depicted as a time of ritual, spirits, healing, and shamanism. Several healers work on the inert body of a sick, younger woman. After much pipe smoking and entering trance like states, the female shaman collapses to the ground. Finally, the younger woman awakes, and the shaman reveals a small bone in the palm of her hand as she discloses, "the spirits put this inside you. This is the bone of an animal. The spirit of the peccary put this sickness in you and it hurt your whole body." She continues to explain to the group of community members gathered around the young woman: "It's everybody's fault. You don't share the food with everyone. You all complain a lot. This is what caused her harm. This is why the spirit came." The shaman is able to heal the young woman while also warning how this individual's illness is inter-connected with and inter-dependent on the community's collective health. The act of complaining and not sharing, or the unseen and unheard here are associated with anti-social behaviors that go against cooperative practices. Here the violation of the shared moral order of reciprocal exchange is dramatized in the above scene as it alludes to ever threatening negative impacts of capitalist logic and influence in the community. Just as Walsh-Dilley (2017) argues that "reciprocity contributes to the production of Andean communities" (p. 521) as part of a dynamic process that responds to shifting spatial-temporal contexts and global forces, so too is the practice of reciprocity a marker for the production of community in Nasepotiti and across the network of Indigenous villages in Brazil.

Conclusion

The poetics of daily life in the above films are located in everyday creativity, in a daily practice of sociality, reciprocity, and sovereignty, in individual and collective processes of self-representation within the cultural logic of each context of production. *Shomotsi* and *Kiarãsã Tõ Sâty, The Agouti's Peanut* can be seen as individual and collective autoethnographies that explore daily life and notions of living well as revealed in each village's social organizations, cosmo-politics, and

spatio-temporal universes. Daily existence in the above films elaborates distinct cinematic idioms while both films articulate cosmological visions as part of their everyday life. Certainly, both films meditate on the inter-connections and inter-dependency between self and community, including animals, the sentient environment, and a greater cosmic order that is embodied and practiced in daily existence. A theory of being, and a politics of co-existence with and within the cosmos is thus expressed through a filmed and filmic repertoire of daily practices. Relevant to this discussion is Silvera Rivera Cusicanqui's affirmation that thought must be produced from the everyday.[13] Through a filmed meditation on the everyday, I have argued that these films resist patriarchal, capitalist modernity by visualizing age old and ever adapting Indigenous epistemes that propose eco-autonomous non-market paradigms of community and well-being. These alternative responses to imposed Eurocentric "progress" are neither anachronistic, static, nor frozen in time, but rather imagine culturally strong futurities for Indigenous presence and therefore a pluriverse free of patriarchal, colonial, and capitalist oppression.

The filmed villages, like the filmed protagonists, are sovereign bodies inasmuch as the body is a vessel for experiencing an immersive and sensorial conception of the cosmos. The embodiment of the camera is part of an inter-connected and interdependent entity within the social-eco-geographical sphere of each village, affirming a sovereign corporeality. These two films as part of VNA's archive can thus be conceptualized into the Zapatista political and poetic dictum, "a world where many worlds fit." My discussion of these two films and their methods of inquiry manifest anti-colonial pedagogies that transcend mere cinematic discourse through a lived and embodied practice of the everyday. To echo Cusicanqui (2010), one of the lessons here is that decolonization must not only be a discourse but an affirmative practice based in the everyday.

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13 Silvia Riveira Cusicanqui is a feminist, Bolivian, sociologist of Aymara descent. See the interview by Kattalin Barber "Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui" (2019) for more.

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